DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 662 EC 231 848

TITLE Program Explanations: A Cooperative Effort between Special Education, Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Eye Care Services.

INSTITUTION Maine State Dept. of Educational and Cultural Services, Augusta.; University of Southern Maine, Portland. Human Services Development Inst.

PUB DATE Oct 87

NOTE 26p.; For a related document, see EC 231 849.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Agency Cooperation; *Cooperative Planning; Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Health Services; Institutional Cooperation; *Optometry; Special Education; *Vocational Education; *Vocational Rehabilitation

IDENTIFIERS *Maine

ABSTRACT

Explanations are provided about Maine's special education, vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and eye care programs and services, to assist teachers and counselors to understand better the mission, eligibility requirements, and service resources each brings to the planning process for students with handicaps. The guidelines were developed to assist local personnel in designing their own improvement process through local policies and procedures. The first chapter outlines the benefits of collaboration among various services to prepare students for a successful and independent post-school life, and describes the voluntary, democratic nature of collaboration. Separate chapters then focus on Maine's Vocational Rehabilitation program, Division of Eye Care Education, Division of Special Education, and Secondary Vocational Education. For each service, the following aspects are described: mission, referral process, eligibility, programs and services, planning with the student, and closure. (JDD)

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A Cooperative Effort Between

Special Education
Vocational Education
Vocational Rehabilitation
Eye Care Services

Program Explanations

EC 231848

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Program Explanations

A Cooperative Effort Between
Special Education
Vocational Education
Vocational Rehabilitation
Eye Care Services

October, 1987

State of Maine
Department of Educational & Cultural Services
Department of Human Services

With Assistance from:

The Human Services Development Institute
University of Southern Maine

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Introduction

Maine's State Cooperative Agreement Team provides the following explanations about Special Education, Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation and Eye Care programs and services to assist teachers and counselors to understand better the mission, eligibility requirements and service resources each brings to the planning process for students with handicaps.

These guidelines have been developed to assist local personnel in designing their own improvement process through local policies and procedures among Special Education, Vocational Education and Rehabilitation and Eye Care Services. Although intentionally flexible to meet local needs, the focus is to bring together the available professional expertise and resources necessary to provide services to handicapped students in every Maine school system. The expertise is available within the special education and vocational education components of each school system and within the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and Division of Eye Care. Combining this expertise and these resources with other school and community resources can lead to the common goal of preparing students with handicaps for a successful and independent post-school life.

Why Have a Cooperative Agreement?

In our society the yardstick against which individual success is often measured is the ability to live independently and to find and continue gainful employment. The transition from school to work and community living is an outcome oriented process encompassing a broad array of services and experiences leading to employment. It is our job in Special Education, Vocational Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation to provide those services and experiences.

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is based upon knowledge about and respect for the professional expertise of each person involved in meeting the student's needs.

But Who Pays for What?

Decisions about which agency pays for what services is based on team members understanding of the abilities and constraints of all agencies involved with the student.

No hard and fast legal prescription exists to define who pays for what. Each situation is different, having a unique set of factors to which the team must respond. Decisions about who pays for what should not arbitrarily be based upon legal mandates or cooperative agreements. These decisions can only be made as a result of assessment of student need and negotiation of services to meet the need.

Why Collaborate?

Individuals working toward a common goal create a team. To be effective we must understand that each member brings a unique set of perspectives, expertise, and resources. To the extent that members learn to respect each other's differences, the following benefits are likely to accrue from the team's diversity.

- More comprehensive information about existing services: All members will have information about the kinds of services their organizations are currently providing to youth with handicaps. When this information is shared, members will find it easier to identify appropriate services for individual students.

- Greater understanding of the needs of youth with handicaps: Since all members and their organizations deal with students with handicaps in different ways, they may perceive different needs. A broader perspective on the needs of students should emerge.

- More comprehensive resources: Each person represents resources (e.g., expertise, funds, equipment, materials, etc.) which other members do not have and about which they may not even be aware. When these resources are shared, better services can be delivered.

- Greater understanding of how resources can be pooled: Once members are aware of the resources that exist and the range of needs that exist, they are likely to perceive ways of pooling resources to address needs of individual students with handicaps.

When and How Does Collaboration Work?

Collaboration is voluntary

To be successful, collaboration must be voluntary. Many people who decide to collaborate may do so because they are under pressure. Unless people truly desire to enter into collaborative relationships, they are unlikely to develop more than token efforts. Only when people have reached their own internal conclusion that collaboration is to their, and their student's advantage, can sufficient commitment of time and resources be generated to insure success.

Collaboration is democratic

Collaboration by its nature is a democratic process. It involves a number of people as equal partners in the planning and implementation of student's programs and services which are mutually selected and developed. No one team member can be dominant, even if they have more resources, status, or power than other members. This is in direct contrast to the most common approach to team collaboration in which one member takes the lead, identifies a particular program or service to be planned, does most of the planning, and involves other members only by asking them to contribute resources.

Collaboration requires time

Team collaboration, if it is to be successful, requires a considerable and continuous investment of time from participants. A genuine effort to develop collaborative relationships will start by making this time commitment. Although we can agree that we are a team and recognize what it takes to be a team, we need to ask ourselves, are we playing on the same field? Only when we remember that each member has a valuable contribution to make, and remember that the purpose of our effort is to improve and to provide career-related services for students with handicaps – only then – will we be playing as a team on the same field.

Yes, the Process and the Planning Are the Same for Everyone!

	Special Education	Eye Care Education	Vocational Rehabilitation	Vocational Education
APPLICANT	refer to PET for assessment of need	Refer to education coordinator for assessment	Functional Assessment (diagnostic study) where counselor determines if student meets the eligibility criteria	identified by PET that the student is interested and can benefit
ELIGIBILITY	Determined by the PET	Determined by the education coordinator	Determined by the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor based on results of the diagnostic study	Determined by the PET which includes a local vocational school representative and ages 16-20, junior or senior in high school
INDIVIDUAL PLAN	IEP Goal Objectives Services Time Schedule Responsible Individual Evaluation	Eye Care provides support & related services of the IEP	IWRP Vocational Goal Objectives Time Frames Responsible Party Evaluation	IVEP Vocational Goal Objectives Learning Outcomes Add or Supplemental Services Responsible Individual Evaluation
PROGRAM/ SERVICES	Instructional & related services	o Itinerant Teacher o low vision services o mobility instruction o special materials o consultation and technical assistance o counseling and advocacy	o counseling & guidance o physical and mental restoration o training o job placement o support services to enable individual to reach vocational goal	o diversified occupations o regular vocational programs o cooperative education o supplemental/ additional staff, equipment, materials, services
CLOSURE	Completes IEP and regular course requirements or age 20 years	o High school graduation or age 21 years	o Successfully employed a minimum of 60 working days	o high school diploma o certificate of program completion
OUTCOME	Ability to function successfully in the community and employment	Same as Special Education	Employment (competitive, sheltered, and supported)	Entry level employment
	with no additional services after high school	with time-limited services after high school	with ongoing services after high school	

Vocational Rehabilitation

Mission

The Maine Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program assists eligible physically and mentally handicapped persons to prepare for and to obtain employment. Services provided to handicapped individuals must be necessary to overcome the vocational handicap and must be provided as cost effectively as possible.

Who Should Be Referred?

Individuals who are suspected of having a physical or mental impairment which inhibits the ability to work, should be referred to a counselor in order to determine if the person is eligible for services.

When Should Students Be Referred to Vocational Rehabilitation?

Referral by the Pupil Evaluation Team to Vocational Rehabilitation for eligibility determination and planning can occur when the student reaches the point in the educational process where specific vocational choices are appropriate. Students should be exposed to career exploration awareness activities, and vocational instruction to frame a positive and realistic concept of the world of work before referral to Vocational Rehabilitation. When specific vocational goals are to be introduced into the instructional plan, the vocational rehabilitation counselor can contribute expertise and knowledge about community resources, other adult services, vocational implications of disability,

job modifications, and vocational adjustment counseling. It is also at this point where the vocational rehabilitation counselor can begin to collect data in order to determine the student's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services.

No single service program will provide all the opportunities that the transition team might desire for individuals with handicaps. *Transition planning should not be put off until a student's final year in school.*

Who Is Eligible?

The vocational rehabilitation counselor determines who is eligible through an assessment of the individual's medical condition, functional limitations, and vocational aptitudes and abilities. The information collected through this comprehensive evaluation process is used to determine if the individual meets the two federal criteria and is therefore eligible.

Criterion One

- The individual has a physical or mental disability which imposes a substantial handicap to that person's employment.

Criterion Two

- With the services of Vocational Rehabilitation, there is a reasonable expectation that the person may be employed.

How Is the Eligibility Decision Made?

- The vocational rehabilitation counselor must have a medical diagnosis confirming the existence of a physical or mental disability. The disability must be stable or slowly progressive; must limit, contribute to limiting or if not corrected, will limit the individual's activities and functioning to prepare for, obtain or retain employment.

- The next step is a functional assessment. This is an organized approach in which the rehabilitation counselor evaluates the individual's capacities, strengths, behaviors, and limitations which may affect vocational potential and successful employment. Factors which may be considered include the individual's physical tolerance, interpersonal skills, mobility capabilities, educational experience, social environment and vocational skills.

- Upon completion of the diagnosis of disability and functional assessment, the vocational rehabilitation counselor decides if the federal criteria are met. If they are met the individual is eligible for services; if they are not, the individual is not eligible. Although the counselor is required to make a timely eligibility decision, there is no requirement to make a decision within a specific time period. (It should be noted that there is an appeals process if the individual wishes to have the counselor's decision reviewed.)

Planning With the Individual Student

In addition to assisting to determine eligibility, the functional assessment is used by the counselor and student to develop an Individual Written Rehabilitation Program (IWRP) that will assist the student to reach his/her vocational goal. These identified functional areas may also be appropriate for inclusion in the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) and Individual Vocational Education Program (IVEP) while s/he is still in school.

The Individual Written Rehabilitation Program is developed with the student and lists the services needed and the steps to be taken to reach the individual's goal of employment. In making decisions on which services a student needs from Vocational Rehabilitation, the counselor will refer to the previously defined functional limitations and assets. The counselor will then coordinate or purchase the needed services. The counselor also is required to make maximum use of similar benefits (services provided or paid for by another organization) unless using those resources would delay services to the student.

Because the most effective way of determining what services will be provided and by whom is through close contact and discussion among interested parties, the counselor will work closely with the Special Education and Vocational Education personnel in planning for the academic, personal, social, and vocational skills necessary for the student to reach the identified vocational goal.

What Are the Programs/Services?

Services that can be coordinated or provided by Vocational Rehabilitation include: Vocational counseling and guidance, physical and mental restoration, job related training, job placement and follow up and support services that allow the individual to participate in these major activities leading to the vocational goal.

When Does the Student Leave Vocational Rehabilitation?

A vocational rehabilitation counselor will generally close a case when the student successfully achieves the vocational goal defined in the Individual Written Rehabilitation Program. The individual must maintain employment for at least 60 days before the placement is considered successful and the case closed.

Division of Eye Care Education Program

Mission

The Maine Division of Eye Care Education program provides specialized supportive and related services to eligible blind and visually impaired children to assist them to benefit from the education program offered by their local education agency.

Who Should Be Referred?

Any child suspected of having a visual impairment that interferes with his/her education should be referred.

Who Is Eligible?

A child is eligible for services from the Division of Eye Care Education program when:

- the individual is a Maine resident; and
- the individual's vision in the better eye with best correction does not exceed 20/70 or whose visual field is less than 20 degrees as determined by an opthalmologist or optometrist; or
- the visual impairment would prevent or seriously interfere with the student being educated in the appropriate local education program.

Planning With the Individual Student

In the case of school-aged blind and visually impaired children, Division of Eye Care staff are members of the local Pupil Evaluation Team and participate in the formulation of the student's Individual Education Program (IEP). If significant activity outside of the IEP is expected, a service plan will be written to specify the other supportive services and case management activity to be performed by Division of Eye Care staff.

In the case of blind infants and preschool children, a service plan is written by the Division of Eye Care education coordinator with the input of parents, itinerant teachers of the blind, and other professionals. The plan will include the child's identified needs, developmental goals, activity or service, and specific time frame in which these activities are to be accomplished. This service plan is reviewed and modified as necessary, and should serve as the basis for referral to a local education agency when the child reaches school age.

What Are the Programs and Services?

Division of Eye Care services for eligible children and youth extend from birth to age 21. Services include consultation and technical assistance provided by Education Coordinators, Itinerant Teachers, Orientation and Mobility specialists as well as the provision or purchase of diagnostic services under certain conditions.

- Six regional Education Coordinators are members of the school Pupil Evaluation Team and work closely with the family, child, and local school. They provide consultation and technical assistance to schools, individuals and agencies, arrange for itinerant teaching and orientation and mobility services for visually impaired children who receive their education program in the local public school, and provide adaptive equipment and special materials as necessary. Education Coordinators monitor the educational process of children who require more extensive programming in out-of-district placement, and serve as liaisons

between residential placement personnel, the family, and local school system.

- Itinerant Teachers work directly with parents and classroom teachers through consultation or with the student on a regular basis to teach braille, typing, taping, use of low vision aids or other adaptive techniques as required.

- Orientation and Mobility specialists provide evaluation, consultation, and training for children in order to help them achieve safe, independent travel.

- Diagnostic services other than those which are the responsibility of the local school system, may be provided or purchased when determined necessary for planning purposes by the Education Coordinator.

When Does the Student Leave the Eye Care Program?

The Division of Eye Care Education program can continue advocacy and case management activities until a student reaches 21 years of age, however most students' cases are closed upon completion of course requirements for school graduation or upon departure from a formal education program. In most cases, closure is accomplished through successful referral to the Division of Eye Care's vocational rehabilitation program. (The goals and procedures followed by this program are the same as those described in the vocational rehabilitation section of this document.)

Special Education

Mission

The program of Special Education is mandated by state and federal legislation. It is committed in principle to provide a free appropriate public education and related services to all exceptional children between the ages of five and twenty years of age who reside within Maine.

In order to fulfill this mission, the Division of Special Education has the primary responsibility to:

- ensure that all local education agencies deliver appropriate education and related services as required by Maine's special education regulations. These regulations govern all phases of special education program development and service delivery at the state and local level.

- provide technical assistance and consultative services to local education agencies.

- monitor programs for adequacy and conformance to state and federal rules and regulations. These include requirements for teacher certification; identification, evaluation, placement procedures, and individualized education program development for students who are handicapped.

***Note:** Special education and vocational education definition of handicapped differ from the vocational rehabilitation definition. The special education regulations and local vocational rehabilitation office can provide their agency's definition.

Who Should Be Referred?

- Any child who may need special educational services should be referred to special education between the ages of five and twenty years. Each local education agency (LEA) must insure that all persons who meet this criterion and who need special education and related services are identified.

- Each LEA is required to maintain a list of preschool children who have been identified as potential handicapped students to be considered for future services once they reach the appropriate age where services are provided.

- Referrals to the Program of Special Education can be made by teachers, principals, counselors, parents, physicians, other state agencies, or anyone who suspects that a child may need special education services.

- A referral should be made to the office of special education in the local school system or to the building principal. It may be initiated with a phone call, but must be written before it can be processed.

- The written referral should contain reasons why the student's problem(s) may adversely affect his/her educational performance. If it is a school based referral, alternative teaching methods that have been tried in the regular program and have failed, must be documented.

Who Is Eligible?

Upon receipt of the referral, a Pupil Evaluation Team (PET) is established in order to secure a signed parental rights and signed permission to evaluate the student. The PET then directs a full formal individual evaluation of the student's needs. An evaluation by a psychologist, psychometrist or other professional qualified to administer appropriate tests is conducted in order to obtain a diagnosis. The

assessment battery will vary for some exceptionalities, however, it must at a minimum include:

- An Individual Intellectual Evaluation (if deemed necessary)
- A Behavior Rating Scale or an Adaptive Behavior Rating
- Other Educational Achievement and/or Diagnostic Test(s)

Upon completion of the assessment battery, a Pupil Evaluation Team is convened to consider the student's eligibility for special education and related services. This team consists of persons knowledgeable of the assessment data and suspected disability, knowledgeable about the student, and knowledgeable of various placement options. Prior to determining eligibility, the Team reviews: the referral form, documentation of the notification of parental rights, written permission for evaluation, all available assessment protocols and reports, and any other relevant information made available.

Based on the assessment data, the Pupil Evaluation Team determines that the child is or is not handicapped and in need of special education. If eligible, an Individualized Education Program is developed and implemented.

Planning With the Individual Student

The student's Individual Education Program (IEP) is developed at a planning conference attended by the following persons:

- A representative of the local education agency, (other than the student's teacher(s), who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education.
- The student's teacher(s), who has the responsibility for implementing the IEP.
- When a student is evaluated for the first time, a member of the evaluation team, or a person knowledgeable about the evaluation procedures and results.

- One or both of the student's parents
- The student, when appropriate
- Other persons, including the vocational education representative, vocational rehabilitation counselor and/or Eye Care education coordinator, when appropriate.

Referral of a student who is handicapped to vocational education and vocational rehabilitation can occur through the initial IEP process or through an annual up-date of the Individual Education Program. Referral to vocational education means the inclusion of vocational education personnel on the Pupil Evaluation Team at such time that the Team begins considering vocational programs as an option for the student. As a general guideline, initial referral to a local vocational center or region program should occur during the 10th grade. Vocational rehabilitation should be contacted at that point where specific vocational choices are appropriate. As a general guideline such referrals would occur one to two years prior to the student leaving school.

The Pupil Evaluation Team jointly plans the student's goals and objectives. The plan is reflected in the Individual Education Program and at a minimum must contain the following components:

- A statement of the student's present level of educational performance
- A statement of annual goals, including short term instructional objectives
- A statement of the specific special education and related services to be provided to the student
- The type of least restrictive environment where the IEP will be implemented, including the extent to which the student will be able to participate in regular education programs

- The projected implementation (beginning and ending) dates specifying the duration of services

- Objective evaluation procedures for determining, at least on an annual basis, whether the short term instructional objectives are being achieved, and

- A list of any modifications required for the student to participate in regular school programs.

- The Individual Education Program must be developed before special education and related services are provided. It must be implemented after the IEP planning meeting and remains in effect for one year. The program may be reviewed and revised more frequently if needed and at the end of one year it must be updated. This process continues for as long as the student remains eligible for special education services.

What Are the Programs and Services?

Special education means classroom, home, hospital, institutional, or other instruction; educational diagnosis and evaluation; transportation and other related services and activities. Services may include counseling and adaptive physical education. It also includes referral to agencies which provide assistance to handicapped persons in such areas as job training and placement, as part of the student's Individual Transitional Plan.

How Does a Student Leave Special Education?

The Pupil Evaluation Team determines when a student will leave the special education system. The decision is based upon whether the individual has completed the Individual Education Program goals and objectives; has completed the regular course requirements for high school graduation or has reached the age of 20 years by July 1 of that year.

Vocational Education

Mission

The mission of Secondary Vocational Education in Maine is to provide programs and services for youth and adults that develop the necessary basic skills and attitudes needed for entering the job market. Vocational Education increases the educational and career options available to secondary students. Upon completing Vocational Education, students possess a combination of academic and occupational skills which prepare them for today's occupations and enhance their ability to adapt to the changes of tomorrow.

Who Is Eligible?

There is no statewide standard that determines who is eligible to enter secondary vocational education programs. Each local vocational school has written descriptions of its courses and recommended pre-requisites for entrance into the programs. Vocational education programs are for students who are interested and can benefit. Questions often arise as to why not all students who are referred are accepted into the vocational education program of their choice. The reason may be the Quota System. This system which is based on a number of factors and formulas is established by the Maine State Board of Education and is used to decide the maximum number of students allowed in each program at any one time. Once the program quota is established it is left to the discretion of each local vocational school to develop policies on admission and criteria for selection of students. Application of the policies are the same for non-handicapped and handicapped individuals. The local vocational center or region director or vocational counselor should be contacted for a

detailed explanation because they vary with local administration. Although local policy differs, the following guidelines are recommended by the Bureau of Vocational Education and apply to all students including those who are handicapped.

Suggested Criteria for Selection of Students:

- The student must be in compliance with applicable secondary school vocational education laws relative to admission. (A student must be at least 16 years old and a junior or senior in high school. A waiver must be obtained from the Commissioner of Education if the student is 16 years old and has not attained high school junior status.)

- Student interest and need for the program selected should be established and documented.

- Past performance through review of student records, particularly of related courses, should be considered.

- A recommendation should be required from appropriate sending and receiving school personnel.

- The student should display positive attitude, ambition, and a willingness to work.

- Attendance should be considered a strong factor.

- Aptitude and interest tests should be considered as one factor.

- Prerequisites where deemed necessary should be a local prerogative.

- The student should possess the potential to perform skills associated with the program chosen.

- Final selection of the student should be a combined effort between sending and receiving school personnel. The decision for handicapped students should occur during the Pupil Evaluation

Team process. This process should provide the information needed in order to decide whether the student is interested in vocational education and has the potential to attain the skills necessary to complete the program.

Suggested Process for Admission of Students:

- A general orientation should be provided for all grade 10 students, and for those grade 11 students interested in one year programs.
- An individual interview or small group conference should be conducted for the student by the sending school personnel.
- A student visitation of the vocational facility should be made to observe the program of interest.
- A student meeting with vocational personnel should be scheduled.
- The student completes application.
- The student is selected.

Suggested Guideline to Determine Number of Training Slots Available to Each Sending School

- A systematic allocation of available slots is distributed to all sending schools. (The allocation formula is locally determined using one of several different methods. The local vocational school director should be contacted to obtain that information.)
- Establish a waiting list for over subscription of programs.
- Develop a system for reallocation of slots due to summer transfers and no-shows.
- A student considers second choice offerings.
- A student considers other program alternatives.

Planning With the Individual Student

As outlined in the suggested criteria for selection of students, sharing of information about the student and joint planning between the sending and vocational schools personnel, as well as accurate student counseling prior to entering a vocational education program, is critical to appropriate placement. In order to facilitate these cooperative activities, it should be noted that the Family Privacy Act Confidentiality law applies to all local vocational schools exactly the same as it does to high schools. Because vocational schools are an integral part of the regular high school, information can be transmitted between them without parents' signatures.

Students will benefit from vocational education to the maximum extent, only if there is ongoing communication between the home school and vocational school teachers in jointly planning and integrating the student's coursework.

Involvement of Vocational Education representatives early in the Pupil Evaluation Team process; sharing with them, pre-vocational assessment results, available medical, educational, social and other relevant information about the student, is critical to the appropriate design of vocational education programs. It is also the basis on which the need for additional services, and equipment and curriculum modification to fit the special needs of the individual student should be decided. The joint planning through the Pupil Evaluation Team process should yield two plans for the student, the IEP and IVEP. These plans when put together will integrate academic and vocational proficiencies that reflect the student's entire educational program.

What Are the Programs and Services?

Programs

Approved vocational education programs consist of three major types. The number and type of each vary in each local area.

- Regular skill training programs with and without additional support or services

- Separate vocational programs where the curriculum is individualized to meet each student's needs. This separate program, called Diversified Occupations, is a skill training program based on a job analysis within the occupation into which the student is being oriented, and is provided through job placement in a variety of settings. Training takes place through various methods including: simulated work, job shadowing, supervised 40 hour work experience and paid supervised work.

- Cooperative Education - Vocational Cooperative Education provides applied job training in live settings. It supports the efforts of that training station with in-school instruction that is related to the world of work and is instruction specific to the occupational training selected.

Supplemental Services

Federal funds from the Carl D. Perkins Act are available, in part, to approved local vocational education programs to provide supplemental services identified by the Pupil Evaluation Team needed by students who are handicapped to enable him or her to successfully participate in an appropriate vocational education program. Such services may include: tutors, aides, curriculum or equipment modification, guidance, counseling and career development assistance.

How Does a Student Leave Vocational Education?

Students officially leave vocational education programs according to locally determined policy. Completion usually is signified by a high school diploma, however, some vocational schools also offer the student a certificate of program completion. Each program instructor determines whether or not such a certificate will be awarded to program completers.